

Columbus Police Division Directive	EFFECTIVE	NUMBER
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Command Protocol and Unity of Command		



I. Definitions

A. Act-in-Command

Any time sworn personnel are temporarily placed into and assume a supervisory position held by a higher ranking officer.

B. *Acting Bureau Manager*

A civilian employee serving temporarily in a managerial position at a higher classification than the person is ordinarily assigned.

C. Command Protocol

The process established to ensure a continuation of supervision at all levels of the chain of command when a vacancy or absence from duty exists, and to identify a position in command of an operation involving multiple Division components.

D. Span of Control

The number of employees reporting to one supervisor.

E. Unity of Command

The concept that Division personnel have one immediate supervisor.

II. Policy Statements

A. Communication Through Channels

1. Division personnel shall forward official communications through their chain of command, beginning with their immediate supervisor.
2. Through what is commonly referred to as an "Open Door Policy," Division personnel are provided the opportunity and freedom to communicate to command **supervisors** any information or problem they feel needs immediate attention; **however**, this shall not be used to avoid addressing a problem through the chain of command. Unless an exception exists, issues or problems shall be referred to the immediate supervisor.
3. Division personnel may bypass the chain of command if information must be brought to the immediate attention of a higher-ranking supervisor, including the Chief of Police, but justification may be required.
4. Division personnel shall not initiate communication or correspondence **to address Division-oriented subject matter** with the Mayor or Director of Public Safety without prior knowledge **and approval from** the Chief of Police. Division personnel shall notify the Chief of Police via the chain of command of any requests made by the Mayor, Director of Public Safety, or City Council.

B. **Sworn** Working Out of Class/Promotions

1. Unless approved by the Chief, sworn personnel shall only be assigned to act-in-command to a position that is one rank higher than currently assigned, and only to fill an extended vacancy at the commander, deputy chief, or chief level. Only sworn personnel assigned to act-in-command as a sergeant for 30 days or more shall be permitted to wear the insignia of the acting rank.
2. ***Supervisors shall not place personnel on restricted duty in act-in-command positions.***
3. Commanders and deputy chiefs may only assign personnel to act-in-command when they will be absent for periods of eight hours or more. Commanders assigned to act-in-command may assign personnel to act-in-command for extended periods for their position.
 - a. When a commander or deputy chief is working, but absent from his or her normal work station due to local training or a similar activity, no acting will be made.
 - b. During short term absences of a ***command level supervisor***, decisions that must be dealt with immediately should be referred to the ***command level supervisor***, to a higher ranking ***supervisor*** in the chain of command, or to an on-duty commander.
4. When a ***temporary*** vacancy occurs, personnel assigned to act-in-command ***should*** be selected from within the chain of command where the vacancy exists.
 - a. A commander or deputy chief may rotate personnel assigned to act-in-command or choose the most qualified ***individual***. However, if the latter course of action is chosen, justification may be required.
 - b. Under normal circumstances, the selected individual should be notified prior to the assignment's effective date.
5. When a vacancy occurs of a permanent nature and the assigned person will not be returning to the assignment, the person assigned to act-in-command should be the next promotable candidate from the current eligibility list for that rank.
 - a. When no eligibility list for the rank of commander exists, the person assigned to act-in-command ***should*** be selected from within the chain of command where the vacancy exists.
 - b. ***For the rank of deputy chief, the selection will be made by the Chief of Police from the candidates meeting the Civil Service Commission minimum qualifications for that rank.***
6. Promotions shall not be made until an actual vacant position exists except under exigent circumstances.

C. Civilian Working Out of Class

- 1. Bureau managers should assign an acting bureau manager when they will be absent for periods of eight hours or more, but not absent from his or her normal work station due to local training or a similar activity.**
- 2. Bureau managers shall not place personnel on probation in an acting bureau manager position.**
- 3. With the approval of the bureau commander, civilian personnel may be assigned to work in a position outside their civil service classification. Any such assignment change for civilian personnel shall conform to applicable Civil Service Regulations as well as applicable provisions in the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.**

D. Acting Chief of Police/System of Succession

1. The Division has established the following system of succession to ensure leadership is provided in the absence of the Chief of Police.
2. Each January, the Chief of Police shall prepare a rotating monthly schedule of emergency Acting Chief of Police assignments for the calendar year.
 - a. If the Chief of Police is unable to report for duty, the list shall be used to determine which deputy chief shall act-in-command of the Division of Police. The deputy chief shall act-in-command until the Chief of Police assigns another deputy chief to act-in-command or returns to duty.
 - b. A copy of the schedule shall be forwarded to the Director of Public Safety, each deputy chief, and Communications Bureau personnel.
3. In non-emergency absences, the Chief of Police shall appoint an Acting Chief of Police.
 - a. These assignments are not required to follow the emergency rotating list.
 - b. Any time a deputy chief is assigned to act-in-command, a notification shall be posted in the Daily Bulletin.
4. Whenever the position of Chief of Police is vacated, the Director of Public Safety may assign an Interim Chief of Police to act-in-command until a new chief is appointed.
5. In the event that the Chief of Police and the deputy chiefs are all absent or incapacitated, the senior commander shall act-in-command **as Chief** of the Division of Police.

E. Multiple Organizational Components Engaged in a Single Operation

1. Unless otherwise directed by Division Directives or competent authority, when personnel from different Division units are engaged in a single operation, the ranking **supervisor** having functional authority over that operation shall also have command authority over all personnel assigned to the operation.
2. In the event a higher ranking **supervisor** wishes to assume command over a particular operation, that higher ranking **supervisor** shall notify the ranking **supervisor** that he or she is assuming command of the operation.

F. The Chief of Police, or his or her designee, shall be responsible for the supervision of special events requiring a police response.

G. Command Protocol for Normal Day-to-Day Operations

For normal operations, personnel shall refer to their particular **Standard Operating Procedures** manual for guidance.

H. Unity of Command

Division personnel shall be administratively accountable to only one chain of command; however, personnel may be temporarily assigned to another chain of command.